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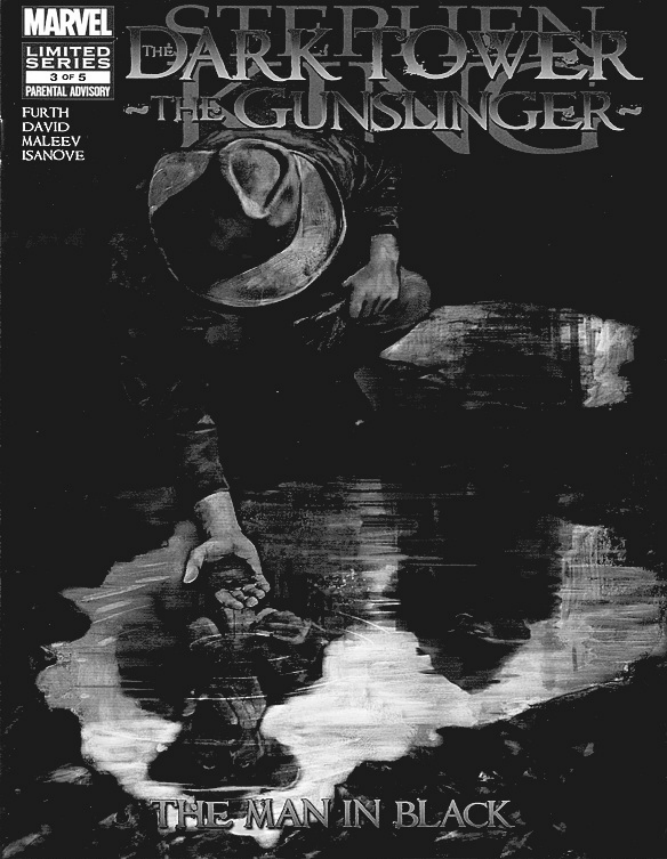
**LIMITED
SERIES**

3 OF 5

PARENTAL ADVISORY

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DAVID
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STEPHEN THE DARK TOWER THE GUNSLINGER



THE MAN IN BLACK

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PREVIOUSLY...

Roland Deschain is the last gunslinger of the line of Arthur Eld. He pursues a being called the Man in Black who Roland believes holds the key to his destiny to reach the Dark Tower and prevent its destruction.

At a way station in the Mohaine Desert, Roland encounters a boy, Jake Chambers, who becomes his companion on his quest. Through an Oracle's premonition he learns: The boy is your gate to the Man in Black. The Man in Black is your gate to the three. The three are your way to the Dark Tower.

So, Roland and Jake set off through the Mohaine together, hoping to make it to the Dark Tower before it's too late. Along the way, Roland explains just what the Dark Tower is: a focal point for all of reality. Only by saving the Dark Tower can Roland and Jake save reality... or rewrite it. With the Man in Black's minions bearing down on them, Roland and Jake have no choice but to sprint to the Dark Tower. The path ahead of them is forged with danger, and may yet prove to be too much for the gunslinger.



Ever see a slow mutant with your own two peepers?

A black and white comic book panel showing a close-up of Roland and Jake. Roland, on the left, wears a wide-brimmed hat and a dark coat, looking intensely at Jake with a grimace. Jake, on the right, has a mustache and is looking back at Roland. They are both holding a long, wrapped object, possibly a gun or a piece of wood, between them.

If not, thank the man Jesus for your good fortune.

Roland and Jake, they find themselves face to... well, what passes for a face in a slow mutant.



These particular ones are the faces of starving idiots...

A black and white comic book panel showing Roland on a wooden cart or platform. He is wearing a hat and a dark coat, and is holding a long, wrapped object. He is looking down at a large, grotesque, and mutated creature that is reaching up towards him. The creature has a large, open mouth with sharp teeth and a long, pointed tongue. The background is dark and indistinct.

...with naked bodies that reek of the wet and the dark.



When Roland fires at the closest one, the gunflash lays bright and branded on the dark retinas of the remaining mutants.

A black and white comic book panel showing a close-up of a mutant's face. The mutant has a large, open mouth with sharp teeth and a long, pointed tongue. It is looking towards the right. In the foreground, there is a large, dark, and textured object that appears to be a piece of clothing or a piece of the mutant's body. The background is dark and indistinct.

The smell of expended powder is hot and savage and alien in this buried place.



None of the others
move against them
overtly...

...but they are closing
in on the tracks, a
silent, hideous party
of rubberneckers.



You may have to
pump for me!
Can you?

Hell,
yes.

Then be
ready.



And
remember...
they can
smell fear.

Well, then
these guys are
smelling sheer
terror. Is that
what's making
them follow
us?



Not just
that. We are
creatures of the
light, you and I.
How they must
hate us.

I wonder
if they hate
the Man in
Black in the
same way.

Probably
not. Perhaps he -
passed them by
like the shadow of
a dark wing in
this greater
darkness.

Not
really caring
right n--

Roland!



I see it!
Take over,
Jake.



Roland says nothing,
but you can guess
what he's thinking:

It's the end for the boy. This
is the end that the Man in
Black meant. Let go and pump
or hold on and be buried.
The end for the boy.

But if that is what's running
through his head, you couldn't
tell none from his actions
as he pumps bullet after
bullet into Jake's attacker.

Jump!

KILL IT!
KILL IT!

That should
finish it!

You said that
before! Keep
shooting!!!

That's it.
We're past
them.

Are
you all
right?



You...weren't
going to leave
me...were you?

Of course
not. We're
just getting
started.

After the
Man in Black,
onward to the
Dark Tower. I
couldn't have
you miss th--

Dammit.

What?
What'd I
do?



Not you.
Them. They've
blocked the
tracks. A hasty
job, but
effective.

Aw God,
I'm *really*
starting to
hate these
guys.

Are
they going
to get us?

Never in
life. Be quiet
a second and
let me finish
reloading.





Okay. Okay,
you'll have to
move the rocks.
I'll cover you.

No...
please...

I can't give
you a gun and I
can't move the
rocks and shoot,
too. You have to
get down and
do it!

*For a moment Jake's body
shudders in tune with the
turnings of his mind...*



...and then moments later
he is throwing rocks to the
right and the left with mad
speed, not looking up.

The guns stitch the darkness
with red-white lances of light
that push needles of pain into
the gunslinger's eyes...

...blinding him with
the light of his
own guns.

One of the mutants suddenly
reaches for the boy with rubber
bogeyman arms. Jake's scream
echoes through the cavern.

With the two heads only inches apart and Roland's vision spotty, it's a powerful dangerous shot.



And it's the mutie who falls.

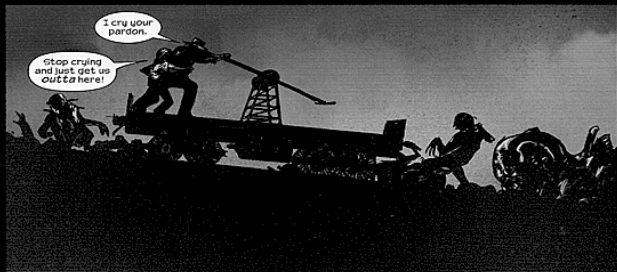


Oh yeah!
There's more
where that
came from!

You want
some more?
Here! And...and
here's some for
you! Eat rock!

All right,
that's good
enough!







Whoa! Did you see what happened when you ran into those things? It was like hitting rotten bananas! Smelled like it, too.

I'm still having trouble seeing from the gun flashes...

It will pass.



I...I don't hear them following us. I don't hear anything 'cept for the river rumbling.

Man, I haven't gone this fast since my father got ticketed for going ninety on the Jersey Turnpike.

The slow mutants...I'm pretty sure they're gone. You can slow down now. We left them behind.

But the gunslinger don't hear him. Or if he does, he ignores him.



Either way, they careen onward into the strange dark.

They go on for three "days" without incident. But during the fourth period of waking...





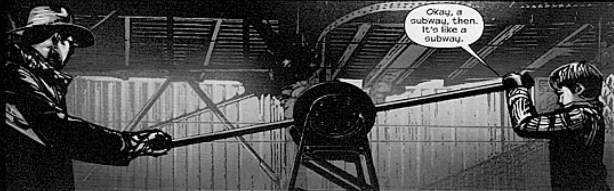
It's a
terminal!

A terminal
what?

Like Grand
Central.

That does
not clarify matters
to the degree that
you might have
hoped.







Yeah. They said something like, "Track 10 to Surface and Points West."

Couldn't you read it? I mean, I figured that's why you took us this path. Because of the whole "to surface" thing.

Yar. I did. I was just curious. That language must be the root of high speech, since...



Why do you snicker?

"Yar." It's just...you sound like a pirate when you say that.

This is not the time for laughter, Jake.



Around here, it never is.



Hey!
Hey, there's
a guy sleeping
in there!



He may well be deep
in the sleep from
which none
awaken.

You're just a
ray of sunshine,
aren't you?

Yo! Hey,
in there!



C'mon, Mister!
Wake up! Which way
is out of here? Is
there anyone else
around? Is--

Oh,
yuck!



Okau,
fine, you were
right!



Are you
happy?



Almost
never.

Gas.

Well,
it wasn't
me.



No, the old
people made a
gas that would do
this. Or so Vannay
told us.

The one
who taught from
books.

Ya--
Yes. He.

I bet these
old people fought
wars with it. Killed
other old people with
it. Turned 'em into
mummies like
this one.



I'm
sure you're
right.

Come. I
saw a weapons
store across
the way.





*But I ask ye not to
judge him too harsh.*

*Can't blame a youngster
for being in a world of his
own when he don't know
what world he's in.*



*Had a lot laid on him
for one so young, is
all I'm saying.*

*So when he sees the
river, it don't remind
him of Roland talking
about corpse lamps.*

*It just reminds
him that he's
thirsty.*



Whoa.
Stars.



But...we're
inside. There's no
stars up there.





Your instincts were right... Roland was ready to leave you...

He knows you are to die. He has prepared himself for it.

You follow Roland, but death walks at his side.

Soon you will tread on death's heels, and that will be your final step.

But it does not have to be that way.



Come to us. We will protect you.



Come.

Come.

TO BE CONTINUED.

MID— WORLD'S RAILWAYS

The underground subway system which Roland and Jake follow during their travels beneath the Cyclopean Mountains is one of the three distinct types of rail transport found in Mid-World. Each class of train—steam, electric underground train, and advanced monorail—has a unique history which is bound to the history of Mid-World itself. Ironically, the most primitive of these trains—the steam trains which still functioned when Roland was a boy—are the most recent, their tracks having been laid after Mid-World's Dark Age had passed, and after Arthur Eld, King of

All-World-that-Was, had united Mid-World's many Baronies under one banner. Unlike Mid-World's steam trains, which were designed by Gilead's engineers, Mid-World's subway system and its monorails are relics of the Great Old Ones' technological wizardry.

I. MID-WORLD'S STEAM TRAINS

When Roland was a boy, the steam-powered Western Line still ran a single train in and out of the capital, but its glory days were long past. Once, this mighty train line ran from Gilead to the Mohaine Desert—a distance of a thousand wheels—but in the years before Gilead fell to Farson's hordes, the line ended at the western railhead town of Debaria, a mere two days journey. West of Debaria, most of the tracklines had either been destroyed by washouts and groundshakers, or had been pulled up by harriers, outlaws, and land-pirates. Since the western baronies were controlled by Farson's lawless bands, it seems likely that many of these rail lines were destroyed by the Good Man's followers. Destroying the railway was central to breaking the gunslingers' contact with these areas, and disrupting their patrols.

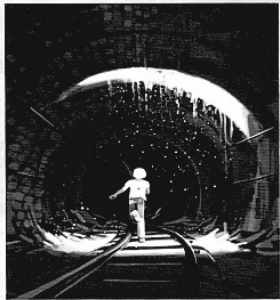
By the time Roland was a young



man, the Western Line ran a single, two-car train between Gilead and Debaria. This train was affectionately known as Sma'Toot. To the people of Gilead, Sma' Toot looked like little more than a steam-driven toy, and they laughed to see it puffing over the bridge to the west of the Palace. However, the small train with its isinglass windows and velveteen seats that folded out into uncomfortable beds did serve an important purpose. It was a lifeline for those western towns already under pressure from Farson's hordes.

II: MID-WORLD'S SUBWAYS

The subway which Roland and Jake discovered under the Cyclopean Mountain Range belonged to the second type of rail system found in Mid-World. As Jake Chambers realized, this system was much like the subways found in our world's New York. Once, this subterranean rail system ran long distance trains between Lud and Dis, but the line was destroyed by an explosion in a nearby nuclear plant. Unfortunately, the Slow Mutants which haunt the underground rail lines are the descendants of the city dwellers and commuters who took shelter in the tunnels after the explosion. Generation after generation



became steadily more mutated, until the mutants could no longer bear the sight of more normal humans. In the end, they became predators, preying upon any beings who wandered into their underground domain. They also practiced cannibalism, eating any member of their tribe born to the true human thread.





III. MID-WORLD'S MONORAIL SYSTEM

Of all Mid-World's train systems, the long distance monorails originating in the city of Lud were the most impressive. They ran on a single track set high above the ground on concrete columns, and flowed into the city on a narrow golden trestle. The trains themselves were enormous—sometimes up to two-wheels long—and were shaped like bullets. They travelled at six hundred and fifty miles an hour, and their passage was often followed by a sonic boom. At the front of each train were two big windows that looked like eyes.

The cradle of Lud—which was much like our world's Grand Central Station—stood at the center of the city's main square, known as the Plaza of the Cradle. Even after being deserted for millennia, no vines overgrew its

sides, and no graffiti daubed its blinding white walls and steps and columns. This was because streams of water coursed endlessly down the cradle's sides, issuing from nozzles hidden in the shadows of its copper-sheathed eaves. A frieze around the building's top depicted the Guardians of the Beam, and each corner was guarded by hideous stone dragons. The Cradle's outer steps led to a great open lobby. High up on the lobby wall were the sculpted heads of Lud's founders.

Unlike the subways found beneath the Cyclopean Mountain Range, Lud's monorails were linked to the city's vast computer network and were given distinct personalities. Those traveling southeast boarded the pink train known as Blaine. Those traveling northwest boarded blue Patricia. Inside each first-class car was a long tubular room furnished with plush upholstered swivel chairs and modular sofas. Chandeliers hung from the ceiling, and a bar was available for refreshments. For travelers' entertainment, both floors and walls could be rendered invisible to give the sense of flying through space. This particular setting was often turned off, since it tended to make those sitting inside the car extremely travel-sick.

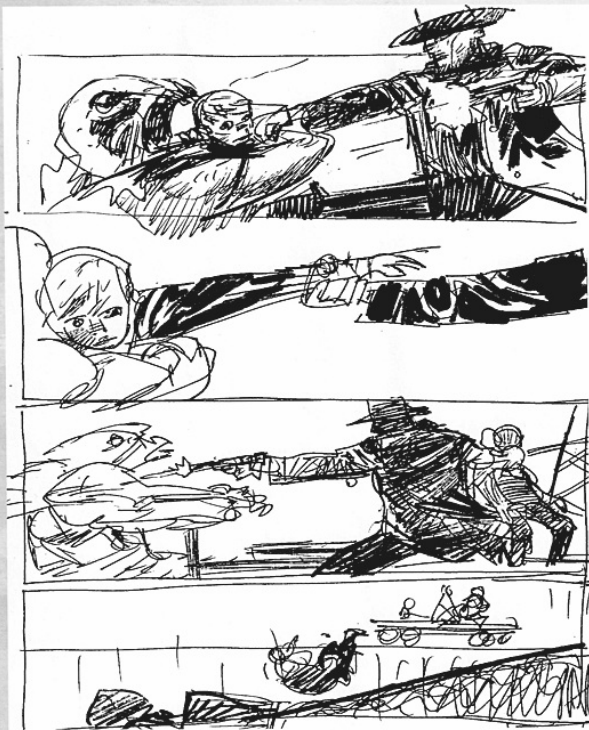
As well as traveling across vast distances at the speed of sound, Lud's monorails were endowed with an extremely unusual property: they could cross the time-space continuum. Just as the Great Old Ones created doorways that led to other *wheres* and *whens* (in other words, to other levels of the Dark Tower), so their trains could travel between alternate realities. Although this powerful type of transport was highly prized by the Great Old Ones, it proved to be their undoing. Just as



their genetically engineered microbes became diseases and their experiments with the time-space continuum made the Dark Tower founder, so their highly computerized trains went mad. Many

crashed from their rails, plunging their travelers into the watery grave of the River Send.

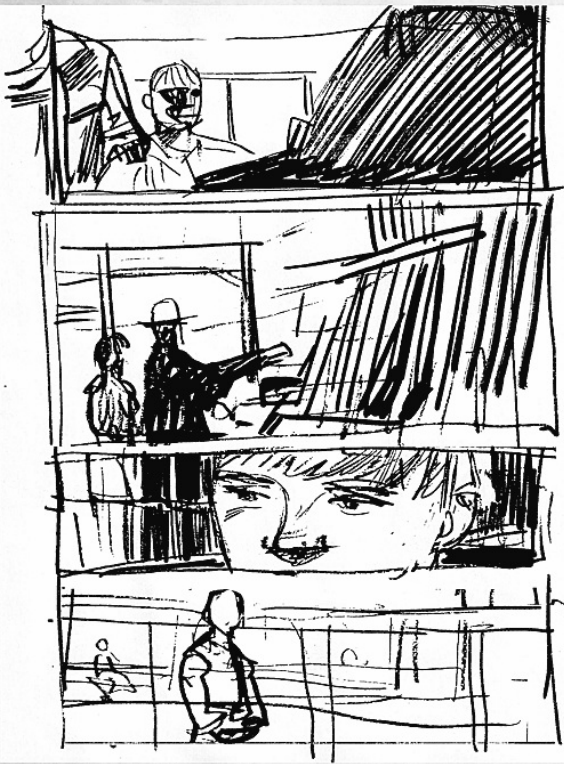
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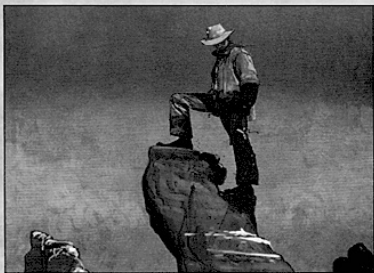


INKS BY ALEX MALEEV



NEXT: "THE CORPSE LIGHTS SAID THAT YOU WON'T GET WHAT YOU WANT UNTIL I'M DEAD. I THINK THEY'RE RIGHT..."





The Man in Black flees across the desert with the gunslinger Roland in close pursuit. In his travels, Roland has battled the possessed and the demonic, while meeting an unlikely ally named Jake Chambers, a young boy from another earth. Now, as the distance between Roland and the Man in Black diminishes, Roland is met with a chilling prophecy: he will find the Dark Tower and obtain his vengeance, but will pay for it with the blood of young Jake.

From the renowned creative team of Robin Furth, Peter David, Richard Isanove, and Alex Maleev comes the final chapter in the Dark Tower saga. With fantasy, horror, revenge, drama, and a dash of the Old West, such a story could only come from storytelling legend Stephen King.

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FOR STRONG LANGUAGE & SEXUAL CONTENT

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